

Duration of Stay in Foster Care

(FY 2022 Appropriation Act - Public Act 87 of 2021)

March 1, 2022

Sec. 501. (1) A goal is established that not more than 25% of all children in foster care at any given time during the current fiscal year, if in the best interest of the child, will have been in foster care for 24 months or more.

(2) By March 1 of the current fiscal year, the department shall provide to the senate and house appropriations subcommittees on the department budget, the senate and house fiscal agencies, the senate and house policy offices, and the state budget office a report describing the steps that will be taken to achieve the specific goal established in this section and on the percentage of children who currently are in foster care and who have been in foster care a total of 24 or more months.



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As of December 31, 2021, 37.6 percent of children in foster care have been in care 24 months or more. Michigan continues to exceed the federal standard for length of stay for children in care. The department continues to evaluate efforts and looks for new opportunities to provide timely permanency for children in foster care. The following initiatives are the primary strategies underway to achieve the goal specified within this section.

Strengthening Our Focus on Children and Families

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2021, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) continued to implement strategies to ensure long-term, systemic reforms in Michigan's child welfare system.

MDHHS continues to implement a statewide continuous quality improvement (CQI) process through the work of the Quality Improvement Council (QIC) and local CQI teams. Over the past year, local CQI teams established new goals to reduce the number of children in residential placements, assess MiTEAM practice sustainability, and improve the frequency children are placed with relatives. Local efforts have identified best practices that are shared with the QIC. The QIC convenes leaders throughout the state to review data, discuss current activities, gathers best practices as identified by local CQI teams, and makes statewide decisions in critical outcome areas including permanency, safety, and well-being.

MDHHS continues implementation of a performance-based child welfare system. In partnership with private agency providers and other stakeholders, current efforts include foster care, and adoption contract outcome measures that are performance based and aligned with evidence based best practice; adoption contracts containing incentives for meeting performance objectives timely; implementation of the Kent County Performance Based Funding pilot; increased supportive visitation services, and Rapid Reunification Efforts.

Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment & Retention Efforts

A sufficient number and adequate array of licensed foster parents across the state are essential to facilitate timely permanence for children in out-of-home care. Efforts to recruit and retain foster parents included:

- Partnership with faith and community organizations.
- Foster parent navigators.
- Adoptive parent navigators.
- An online conference was held in May 2021 for foster, adoptive and kinship parents to provide training and support to foster and adoptive parents.
- Six hours of training was provided to field staff around the topic of effective recruitment and retention planning.
- Partnership with the Capacity Building Center for States.
- Continuation of contracts to provide regional recruitment and training services throughout the state.

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- Developed and implemented annual adoptive and foster parent retention and recruitment plans that identified local and state-wide licensing goals and recruitment and retention efforts.
- Partnership with Family Enrichment Center, Adoptive Family Support Network, Kids Belong, MSU Kinship Care Center, Fostering Forward of Michigan, The Muslim Foster Care Association, and other foster parent led programs and organizations.
- A new caregiver preservice training curriculum was implemented statewide. This curriculum will better prepare families for their roles as foster or adoptive parents.
- Surveys were sent to caregivers who closed their licenses to help us understand and address common reasons for closure.
- Procurement of a statewide marketing campaign to raise awareness about the need for foster parents in Michigan.
- Documents and material to enhance targeted recruitment within communities of color.
- Expanded eligibility for funding to assist prospective and existing caregivers with becoming licensed or maintaining licensure.

Team Decision Making (TDM) Model

MDHHS piloted (2019-2020) and implemented (select counties across the state) in 2021 the Team Decision Making (TDM)[™] model that uses an objective facilitator to conduct meetings following an evidence-informed six stage model. TDM is an inclusive, decision-making process where parents, youth, caregivers, family, and community supports have a voice at the table regarding decisions that affect their families.

TDMs occur at key decision points in a case:

- Before considered removals and the next business day after emergency removals.
- Before changes of placement.
- Before the start of unsupervised parenting time and return home.

Given the Permanency Resource Monitors (PRM) experience as permanency experts for local child placing agencies, their awareness of the importance of establishing permanency for each child and youth in the child welfare system and their knowledge of community resources and new approaches to planning for children in care, especially for those who have been in care for extended periods of time, during FY 2021, the role of the PRMs changed to provide objective facilitation for family meetings through the use of the TDM model.

In 2019/2020, TDMs were implemented in five counties and one district in Wayne County. In 2021, TDMs were expanded and currently include 24 counties and all three Wayne County districts. In 2021, TDM Facilitators facilitated over 6,400 TDMs.

The grid below identifies the TDM sites and their implementation dates:

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BSC 5	
Counties	Implementation Date
Oakland	March 1, 2021
Wayne- South	March 1, 2021
Western Wayne	March 1, 2021
Wayne-North	December 2019 through June 2020
Genesee	December 2019 through June 2020
Macomb	December 2019 through June 2020
BSC 4	
Counties	Implementation Date
Jackson	March 29, 2021
Washtenaw	March 29, 2021
BSC 1	
Counties	Implementation Date
Crawford-Oscoda-Otsego	April 19, 2021
Delta-Dickinson-Menominee	April 19, 2021
Grand Traverse-Kalkaska-Leelanau	April 19, 2021
BSC 2	
Counties	Implementation Date
Saginaw	May 24, 2021
St. Clair-Sanilac	May 24, 2021
Ingham	December 2019 through June 2020
BSC 3	
Counties	Implementation Date
Calhoun	June 21, 2021
Ionia-Montcalm	June 21, 2021
Muskegon	June 21, 2021
Ottawa	June 21, 2021
Kalamazoo	December 2019 through June 2020.

Performance-Based Adoption Contracts

Over 90% of child welfare adoptions in Michigan are completed by contracted private adoption agencies. Adoption performance outcomes per current contracts:

- Fewer than 5% of placements for adoption will end in disruption.
- Fewer than 5% of finalized adoptions will end in dissolution.
- By September 30 of the fiscal year, not less than 80% of the number of children with a goal of adoption who were legally free for adoption on September 30 of the previous fiscal year, shall have adoptions finalized.

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- By September 30 of the fiscal year, not less than 80% of the number of children with a goal of adoption who were legally free for adoption on September 30 of the previous fiscal year, will have the adoption petition filed with the court.

Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) Adoption Permanency Specialists

During FY 2021, MDHHS expanded the MARE contract to include Adoption Permanency Specialists positions to conduct reviews of recruitment plans for youth legally ready for adoption without an identified family prior to being referred to the Adoption Resource Consultant program discussed below. During the review meetings, permanency specialists review with the youth's caseworkers and providers the completed recruitment plans, strengths & needs of the youth, important individuals in the child's life and review and evaluation of inquiries and recruitment activities. Meetings are conducted between the 3 and 6 month and 6 and 9 month marks following a youth being legally ready for adoption without an identified family.

Adoption Resource Consultants (ARCs)

MDHHS contracts with Judson Center and Orchards Children's Services to provide ARC services state-wide. These specialized consultants review all cases following termination of parental rights when the child has a goal of adoption for more than one year and does not have an identified adoptive family. The ARCs have demonstrated adoption experience and have received training by national experts on adoption best practices. The ARCs review the individual recruitment plan for each child and determine if all efforts to achieve adoption have been completed. They work with the assigned staff to expand recruitment efforts, locate extended family members that may be appropriate for adoptive placement, and involve youth in their adoption planning. Intensive recruitment services are also provided through the ARC contracts. During FY 2021, MDHHS continued their partnership with the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, Wendy's Wonderful Kids program to provide training and support in the evidence-based child focused recruitment model for Michigan's youth.

Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) Match Support Program

The MARE Match Support program is a state-wide service for families who have been matched with a child from the MARE website and who are in the process of moving forward with an adoption. The MARE Match Support program has specialists who provide up to 90 days of services to families by providing them with referrals to support groups, educational training opportunities, and community resources. The specialists are a great support for the family throughout the adoption process.

MARE Waiting Family Forums

To assist adoptive parents through the match process, the MARE Adoption Navigators host Waiting Family Forums across the state. Prospective adoptive parents learn what happens after they submit inquiries on the MARE website, find out what they can do to make the most of their wait time, learn ways to strengthen their inquiries, get tips on how to effectively advocate for their family, and meet other waiting families. Families

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who are approved to adopt and families who are in the process of completing their home study are all welcome to participate.